



Testimony of Environment Connecticut State Director Chris Phelps
Before the Connecticut General Assembly Energy and Technology Committee

March 5, 2019

Regarding:

H.B. No. 7151 AN ACT CONCERNING ENERGY EFFICIENCY STANDARDS.

H.B. No. 7251 AN ACT CONCERNING LONG-TERM CONTRACTS FOR CERTAIN CLASS I
GENERATION PROJECTS AND THE RESIDENTIAL SOLAR INVESTMENT PROGRAM
REQUIRING A STUDY OF THE VALUE OF SOLAR.

Senator Needleman, Representative Arconti, and members of the Energy and Technology Committee, my name is Chris Phelps and I am State Director for Environment Connecticut. I thank you for the opportunity to submit these comments regarding the bills listed above.

Environment Connecticut is a nonprofit citizen-based environmental advocacy project of Environment America. We work to fight climate change and for a cleaner, greener future for Connecticut and our nation. We represent over 20,000 supporters and activists across Connecticut.

1. H.B. No. 7151 AN ACT CONCERNING ENERGY EFFICIENCY STANDARDS.

H.B. 7151 would update and expand energy and water efficiency standards for commonly used home and commercial appliances and electronics sold in Connecticut. Using energy more efficiently means less pollution, helps meet Connecticut's climate goals, and puts money back into the pockets of consumers. Environment Connecticut strongly supports H.B. 7151.

Adopting the product efficiency standards in this legislation would produce significant environmental and economic benefits for Connecticut. Specifically, by 2025 these proposed standards would:

- Save Connecticut consumers \$80 million annually.
- Cut carbon dioxide emissions from electric generation by 82 thousand metric tons annually.
- Reduce water consumption by 2,258 million gallons annually.

In 2018, Vermont adopted many of these same standards. In 2019, numerous states across the Northeast and nationwide are moving forward with similar legislation. In contrast, the federal government is contemplating rollbacks of various standards. Enacting H.B. 7151 can help protect Connecticut's economy and environment from the effects of possible federal rollbacks.

Enacting these standards will strengthen Connecticut's economy by reducing energy waste and keeping money in consumer's pockets. It will also cut pollution and help the state meet its climate goals. Environment Connecticut urges support for H.B. 7151.

2. H.B. No. 7251 AN ACT CONCERNING LONG-TERM CONTRACTS FOR CERTAIN CLASS I GENERATION PROJECTS AND THE RESIDENTIAL SOLAR INVESTMENT PROGRAM REQUIRING A STUDY OF THE VALUE OF SOLAR.

In 2018, Connecticut passed Public Act 18-50. Unfortunately for our state's economy, consumers, and environment, when it comes to solar power policy, PA 18-50 took an approach of "if it ain't broke, break it." In 2019, the legislature has an opportunity to fix the damage done by PA 18-50. Unfortunately, H.B. 7251 fails to accomplish that task. Environment Connecticut opposes this bill in its current form and urges the committee to make substantive changes that can restore policies supporting continued growth of solar power in our state.

A decade ago, Connecticut's solar power industry barely existed. While states such as New Jersey and Massachusetts were creating jobs and rapidly growing the solar power's share of electric generation, Connecticut had few solar installations and was experiencing job losses in the industry. The situation for solar power changed in our state with the signing of Public Act 11-80. That legislation kick started growth of solar power here.

Over the past 8 years, hundreds of megawatts of solar power have been built statewide. Solar power, ranging from large grid-connected systems to single homes with rooftop panels, is helping move our state towards a renewable energy future. Along the way, the solar industry grew rapidly and now employs over 2,000 people in our state, and families and businesses have taken more effective control of their energy costs by freeing themselves of dependence upon distant power plants and utilities. Unfortunately, PA 18-50 put that progress in jeopardy.

The most anti-solar, anti-jobs, and anti-consumer element of PA 18-50 is its elimination of "net metering," the policy that enables consumers who purchase and use solar power systems to be fairly compensated not simply for the energy they generate and use, but also for the energy they generate and deliver to the electric grid. In place of the proven and successful net metering policy, PA 18-50 requires Connecticut to pursue alternate schemes that have been tried, and failed in states such as Utah, Nevada, and Maine.

To be very clear: PA 18-50 replaced Connecticut's proven, effective solar power net metering policy with policies proven to be job-killing, anti-consumer, and anti-renewable energy. If the legislature fails to enact legislation in 2019 stopping implementation of PA 18-50, then the

predictable result is rapid decline in the pace of solar installations in our state, more dependence on polluting fossil fuels, and lost jobs.

Environment Connecticut respectfully suggests that any legislation to fix the damage done by PA 18-50 and continue growth of solar power in Connecticut should:

- Maintain net metering policy in the same form it existed prior to PA 18-50 and allow for a more thoughtful, and considered approach to evolving the policy in future years. – Without this change, our state would be almost certain to follow Maine, Nevada, and Utah down the path of no solar power growth, higher prices, and job losses.
- Extend for at least 2 more years the very successful ZREC/LREC program that has supported significant growth of commercial solar projects.
- Eliminate caps on the amount of both commercial and residential solar power that can be built in Connecticut. The policy of the state should be to encourage, not limit, growth of solar power.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this testimony. Environment Connecticut supports H.B. 7151 and urges its passage. Regarding H.B. 7251, we oppose the bill in its current form and urge the committee to instead incorporate the specific suggestions included in our testimony, in particular restoring net metering policy as it existed prior to PA 18-50, in order to support continued growth of solar power and job creation in Connecticut.

Sincerely,

Chris Phelps
Environment Connecticut State Director